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band is caused by the absorption of the other constituents of white light in traversing so great an amount of atmosphere. This hypothesis is also maintained by Mr. Martin in his Notes, F. p. 497: and he gives a much fuller and better account of the phenomenon as observed in morning twilight by M. Bravais from the summit of the Faulhorn. If it were really due to this cause, no reason could be assigned for the gradual fading and disappearance, first of the yellow and then of the red light, when they have risen about  $20^\circ$  above the horizon; they ought to follow the sun completely across the sky. I believe the phenomenon to be due to the formation of an iris by the sun's light falling on the vapor of the atmosphere which has become partially condensed as the sun has receded; probably this will be found to correspond with the iris given by five internal reflections and two refractions of the sun's rays.

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*November 17th, 1857.*

Vice President LEA in the Chair.

The following papers were presented for publication in the Proceedings:

"Descriptions of some new Reptiles collected by the U. S. Exploring Expedition, under the command of Capt. Chas. Wilkes, U. S. N., by Charles Girard."

"Notices of new Genera and species of marine and fresh-water fishes from Western North America, by Charles Girard."

"Description of a new species of *Cypselus*, collected in the N. W. Boundary Survey, A. Campbell, Esq., Commissioner, by C. B. R. Kennerly, Surgeon and Naturalist of the Expedition."

"Notes on the American species of *Archibuteo* and *Lanius*, and Description of a new species of *Toucan*, of the genus *Selenidera*, by John Cassin."

Which were severally referred to Committees.

Mr. Cassin read the following extract from a letter of Mr. P. B. DuChaillu.

*Fernando Paz River, August 17th, 1857.*

"While hunting after the Gorilla a few days ago, I met with a male surrounded by a few females. The male has a red crest, like a cock.

"Both the guinea fowl and the black pheasant are birds which are not seen before you reach fifty or sixty miles in the interior, and are unknown to the natives of the sea shore. The birds of the Fernando Paz country, until you reach the interior, are exactly the same as those of Cape Lopez, the country being similar in appearance. At the Cape properly there is no town: the largest town of the Cape Lopez people is Sangatonga, situated in the bay formed by the Cape. It is the residence of the king, and is situated in a beautiful prairie at the foot of a hill rising about two miles in the interior. The soil of Cape Lopez is generally light and sandy; the country presents an aspect quite different from that between Fernando Pô and the Gaboon, looking a good deal like the countries of Southern Africa toward the Cape of Good Hope—large prairies with groves of trees. In these groves the Cape Lopez people have their plantations, as the soil is good. Sweet potatoes, cassada, plantain, ground nuts and sugar cane are the products. They plant in pretty large quantities, as these form the main staple of their food; sweet potatoes, especially, grow well. Good roads could easily be made, and would be a powerful aid to colonization. The raising of cattle could be made a profitable business, for the prairie land would afford good grazing. A good many wild cattle are seen wandering over the

[November,

prairies. Water seemed to be rather scarce, having met, during a journey of sixty miles into the interior, but four streams: but the natives have assured me that at the bottoms of the hills in the midst of the groves there are a good many brooks. So far as I have been into the interior I found the country hilly: I did not meet with marshy ground but at a single place, and that marsh was small. About fifty miles in the interior the prairies become smaller and woods take their place. The country through which I passed was thinly populated: the people have generally to stay on or near the Gaboon or Nazareth rivers or their tributaries. This want of population would be a drawback to colonization, as would also the want of a good harbor. The country near the Nazareth is better off in this respect."

November 24th, 1857.

Vice President BRIDGES in the Chair.

The Committees to whom were referred the following papers, reported in favor of publication, viz:

"Descriptions of some new Reptiles, collected by the U. S. Exploring Expedition under the command of Capt. C. Wilkes, U. S. N., by Chas. Girard."

"Notices of new genera and new species of marine and fresh-water Fishes, from Western North America, by Chas. Girard."

"Description of a new species of *Cypselus*, &c., by C. B. R. Kennerly."

The Committee on Col. Abert's "Description of a Mocking bird, supposed to be new," was discharged at its own request.

**Descriptions of some new Reptiles, collected by the United States Exploring Expedition, under the command of Capt. Charles Wilkes, U. S. N.**

FOURTH PART.—Including the species of *Saurians*, exotic to North America.

BY CHARLES GIRARD, M. D.

#### SCINCIDÆ.

1. *CRYPTOBLEPHARUS EXIMIUS*.—Scales disposed upon twenty-four longitudinal series, around the middle region of the body. Subcaudal scales equal or subequal. Back greenish; two light lines, or streaks, on each side; beneath unicolor.

*Locality*.—Feejee islands.

2. *EUPREPIS VENUSTUS*.—Body and head slender and depressed; tail subconical posteriorly. Forty-three to forty-five longitudinal series of scales. Pre-frontal plate lozenge-shaped. External row of preanal scales larger than the rest. Back chestnut brown; a black streak from the eye to the base of the tail, margined, superiorly, by a fuliginous line, extending from the supraciliary region to the anterior third of the tail, and, inferiorly, by a yellow line from the axilla to the groin; lower portion of the flanks yellow, speckled with black. Throat whitish; abdomen light brown, unicolor.

*Locality*.—Cape de Verde islands.

*CYCLODINA*, (nov. gen.).—Body elongated, slender, subquadrangular, depressed, covered with large scales, striated under the epidermis. Head small, depressed, anteriorly obtuse. Nostrils in one plate; no supranasals; a pair of parietals. Maxillary teeth conical; palate toothless. Tongue flat, scaly, nicked at the extremity. Lower eye-lid scaly. Auricular apertures simple. Limbs four, weak, far apart, five fingers and five toes, rather short, subcylindrical and clawed, their inferior aspect transversally plated, smooth; palms and soles coarsely granular or subtubercular. Tail moderate.

1857.]